

PETER CALLOWAY • ALEX SHIBAO

# THE LAST SPACE RACE

SASHA

VOLUME

1

Alex  
Shibao

"This is a great read.  
More, please."

SCIFI PULSE

NATÁLIA MARQUES  
MARSHALL DILLON



AFTERSHOCK

AFTERSHOCK  
ADVANCES

PALE BLUE DOT



SHHH IIISSSS  
SSHHHH

...DON'T KNOW  
IF THIS...

# AFTERSHOCK ADVANCES



SSHHSSHHH  
SHHHIIISSSS

...FUCKING--  
PIECE OF SHIT--

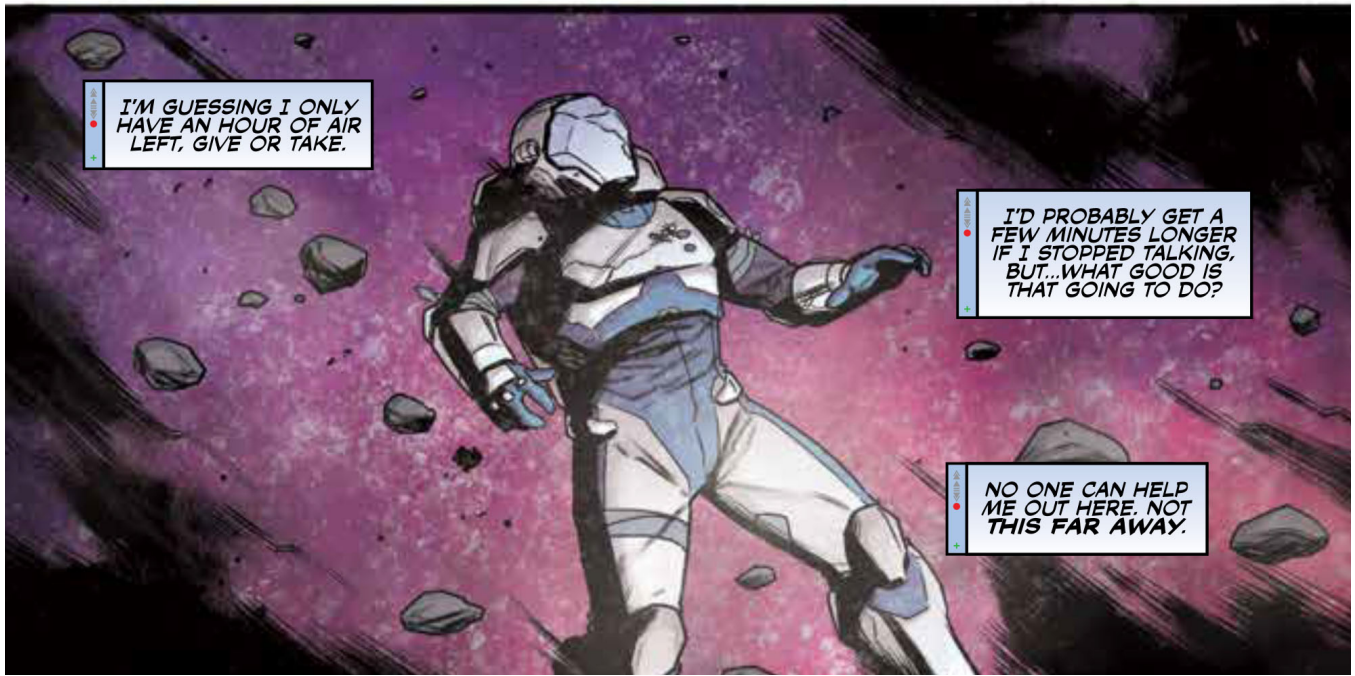


WAIT, THERE  
I THINK THAT'S--  
YEAH, OKAY,  
RECORDING.

SO, Uhh--I'M NOT  
EXACTLY SURE HOW LONG  
I HAVE. THE O<sup>2</sup> READOUT  
ON THIS SUIT FAILED  
MONTHS AGO.



I'D BLAME THE GUY WHO  
DESIGNED THE SUIT... EXCEPT  
I DESIGNED IT. SO, NICE  
FUCKING WORK, PAST ME.



I'M GUESSING I ONLY  
HAVE AN HOUR OF AIR  
LEFT, GIVE OR TAKE.

I'D PROBABLY GET A  
FEW MINUTES LONGER  
IF I STOPPED TALKING,  
BUT...WHAT GOOD IS  
THAT GOING TO DO?

NO ONE CAN HELP  
ME OUT HERE. NOT  
THIS FAR AWAY.



THIS IS HOW I'M  
GOING TO DIE.

ON THE BRIGHT SIDE, AT  
LEAST I HAVE A NICE VIEW.

**AFTERSHOCK**  
ADVANCES

SEVERAL YEARS EARLIER.

I SHOULDN'T BE SURPRISED, REALLY.

...I KNOW HONEY...I KNOW.

THIS VOYAGE WAS ALWAYS GOING TO END IN DEATH. WE ALL KNEW THAT FROM THE START.

...BUT WHAT AM I SUPPOSED TO DO? I GET THE TIME ON THE TELESCOPE THAT I GET ASSIGNED, YOU KNOW THAT.

IT WAS THE ONLY CERTAIN OUTCOME.

...HONEY, SWEETIE--THEY WON'T CARE THAT IT'S YOUR BIRTHDAY NEXT WEEK.

OF COURSE I CARE, BUT THEY--

DING

ALERT

AFTERSHOCK  
ADVANCES

I GUESS... I GUESS I JUST WISH I KNEW.

...NO NO, THAT'S NOT WHAT I MEAN AT ALL, ERIC. WHAT I MEAN IS--

I WISH I KNEW WHAT IT WAS.

CLICK



I WISH I HAD SEEN IT WITH MY OWN EYES.



I WISH I KNEW WHY IT WAS HERE.

THIS IS  
YOUR CAPTAIN,  
SASHA BALODIS,  
SPEAKING.



**AFTERSHOCK**  
ADVANCES

IT'S WITH  
EXCITEMENT  
AND PRIDE THAT  
I WELCOME  
YOU ALL TO THE  
INAUGURAL FLIGHT  
OF **PIGEON  
SPACELINES**.



EXCITEMENT  
AND PRIDE,  
*huh?*

WHAT'S  
WRONG WITH  
THAT?

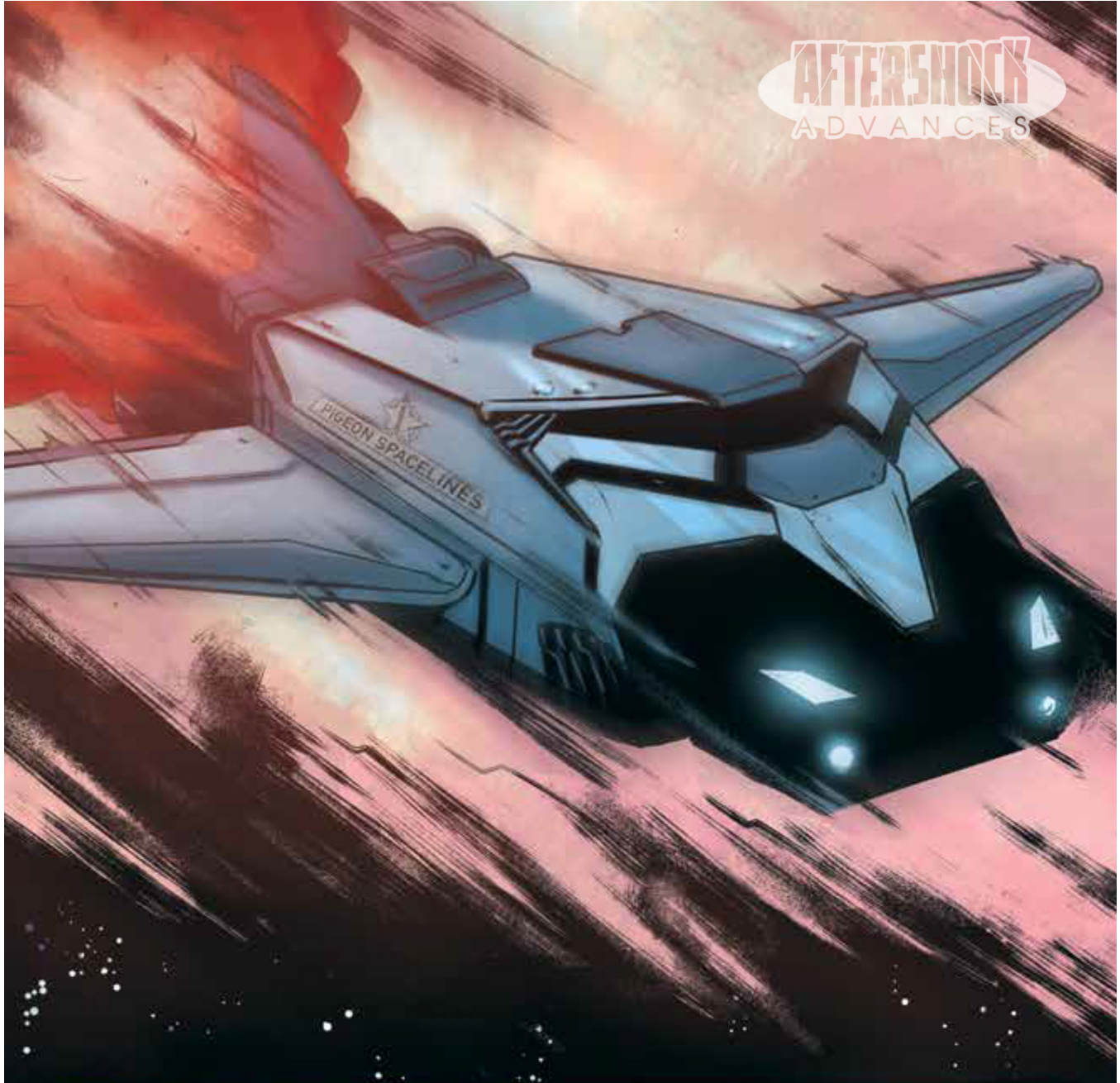
NOTHING,  
IT'S JUST  
EARNEST.

MAYBE I'M  
EARNEST.

I  
THOUGHT  
YOU WERE  
SASHA.







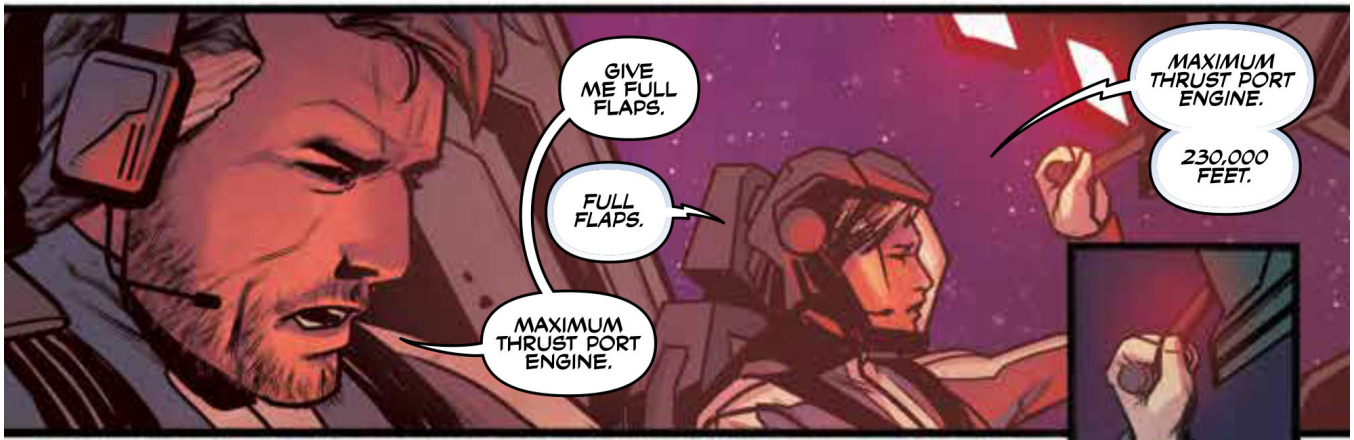
**STARBOARD  
ENGINE FAILURE!  
MAIN CABIN  
PRESSURE  
LOSS!**

**PASSING  
275,000  
FEET!**

**CAN YOU  
RESTART THE  
ENGINE?**

**NO, IT'S--  
I THINK IT'S  
GONE.**





GIVE ME FULL FLAPS.

FULL FLAPS.

MAXIMUM THRUST PORT ENGINE.

MAXIMUM THRUST PORT ENGINE.

230,000 FEET.



**AFTERSHOCK**  
ADVANCES

MAYDAY  
MAYDAY  
MAYDAY.

GROUND CONTROL  
THIS IS  
PS 1.

WE HAVE  
EXPERIENCED  
CRITICAL ENGINE  
FAILURE IN  
STARBOARD  
ENGINE.

175,000  
FEET. SPEED  
INCREASING.



SAY  
AGAIN,  
PS1.

SASHA,  
IF YOU'RE  
GOING TO DO  
SOMETHING,  
DO IT  
NOW.

I'M TRYING!  
I'M NOT GETTING  
ANY FEEDBACK  
ON THE  
CONTROLS.

115,000  
FEET.

WHY  
AREN'T I  
GETTING  
ANY--



ZZZZZ

KRACKLE

KA-  
ZARK

ZKZZZ

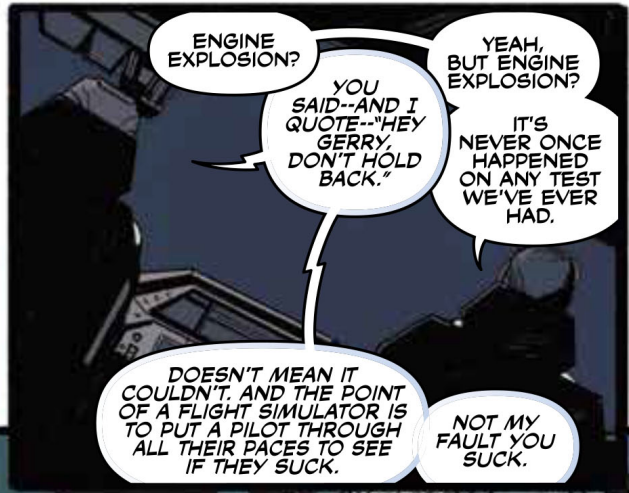
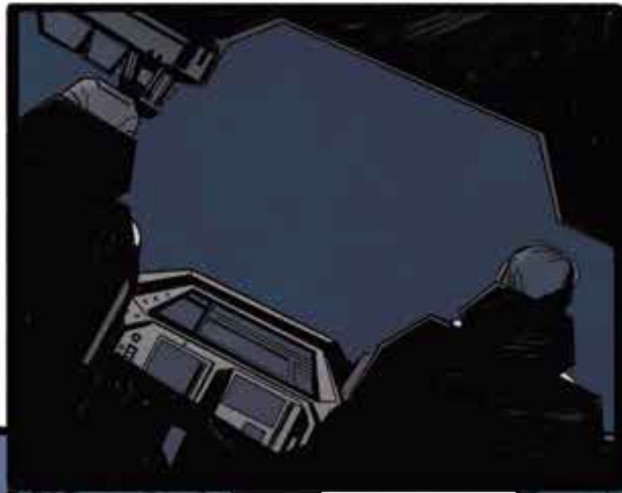
KZZZ



...OH,  
FUCK.

ALL  
INSTRUMENTS  
DEAD.





ENGINE EXPLOSION?

YEAH, BUT ENGINE EXPLOSION?

YOU SAID--AND I QUOTE--"HEY GERRY, DON'T HOLD BACK."

IT'S NEVER ONCE HAPPENED ON ANY TEST WE'VE EVER HAD.

DOESN'T MEAN IT COULDN'T. AND THE POINT OF A FLIGHT SIMULATOR IS TO PUT A PILOT THROUGH ALL THEIR PACES TO SEE IF THEY SUCK.

NOT MY FAULT YOU SUCK.



GERRY, YOU KNOW I'M YOUR **BOSS**, RIGHT? AND THAT I **OWN** ALL OF THIS?

SO THEN YOU KNOW I COULD FIRE YOU.

YEAH.

YEAH.

BUT YOU WON'T.



YOU ARE MOST ANNOYING WHEN YOU'RE RIGHT.



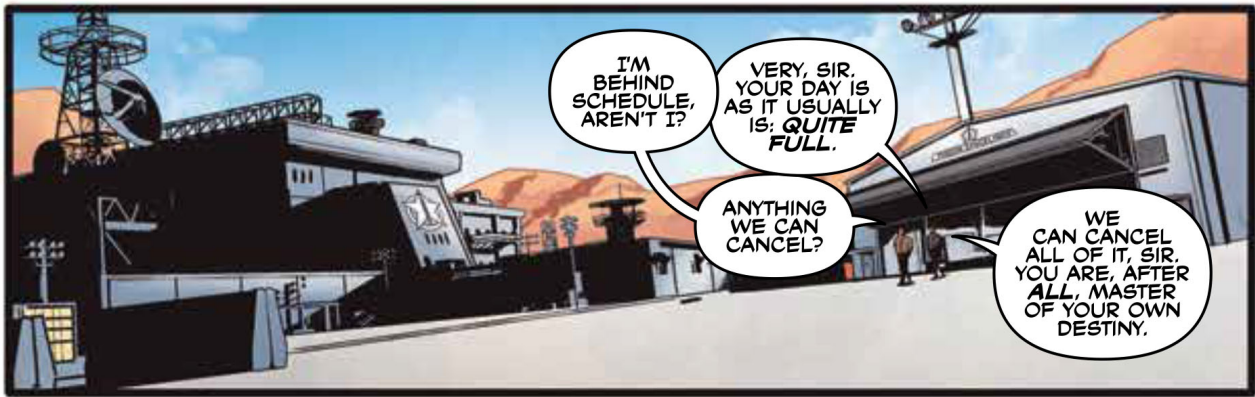
SAME TIME TOMORROW THEN?

YEAH-YEAH, SAME TIME TOMORROW.

YOU'RE GETTING BETTER, SASHA.

LIE AGAIN AND I'LL FIRE YOU.

NO YOU WON'T.



I'M BEHIND SCHEDULE, AREN'T I?

VERY, SIR. YOUR DAY IS AS IT USUALLY IS: **QUITE FULL.**

ANYTHING WE CAN CANCEL?

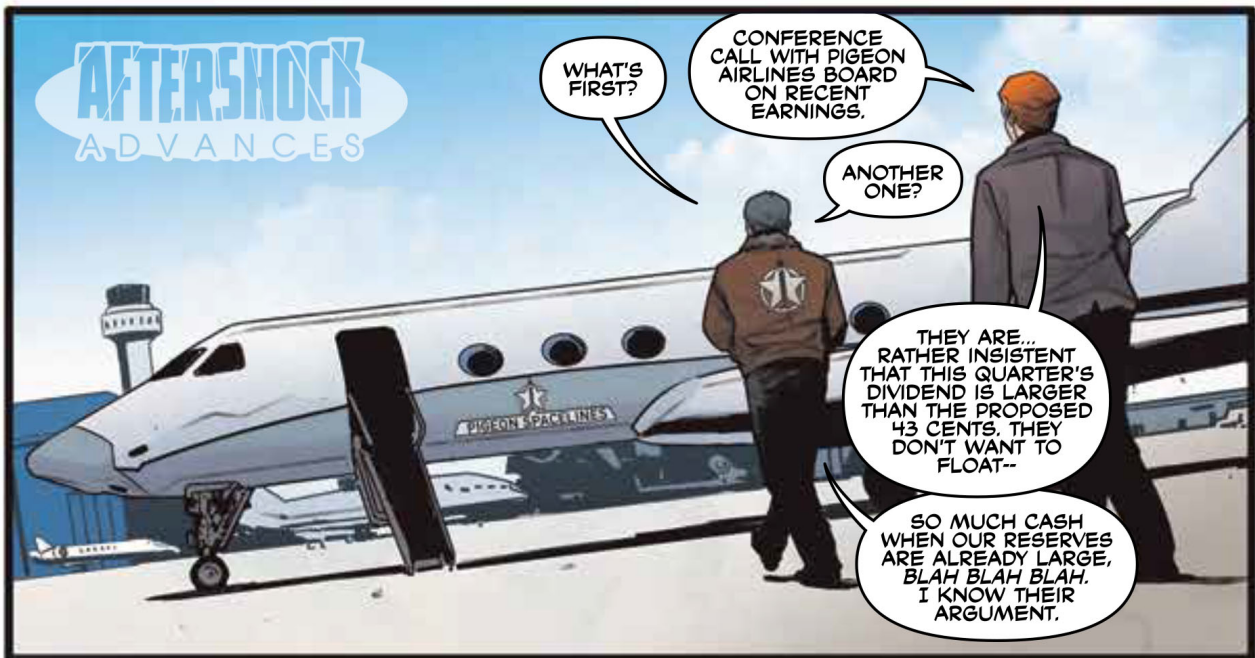
WE CAN CANCEL ALL OF IT, SIR. YOU ARE, AFTER **ALL**, MASTER OF YOUR OWN DESTINY.



NEIL, WHY DOES EVERYONE THAT WORKS FOR ME LIE TO ME?

BECAUSE THEY DON'T WANT TO DAMAGE YOUR FRAGILE EGO.

VALID REASON.



**AFTERSHOCK**  
ADVANCES

WHAT'S FIRST?

CONFERENCE CALL WITH PIGEON AIRLINES BOARD ON RECENT EARNINGS.

ANOTHER ONE?

THEY ARE... RATHER INSISTENT THAT THIS QUARTER'S DIVIDEND IS LARGER THAN THE PROPOSED 43 CENTS. THEY DON'T WANT TO FLOAT--

SO MUCH CASH WHEN OUR RESERVES ARE ALREADY LARGE, BLAH BLAH BLAH. I KNOW THEIR ARGUMENT.



OUR RESERVES STAND AT ALMOST **20 BILLION**. THEY HAVE A POINT.

I.. I WANT TO HOLD ON TO THAT MONEY.

WHY, SIR?

I HAVE PLANS FOR IT.



YOU... HAVE PLANS.

I MAKE PLANS.

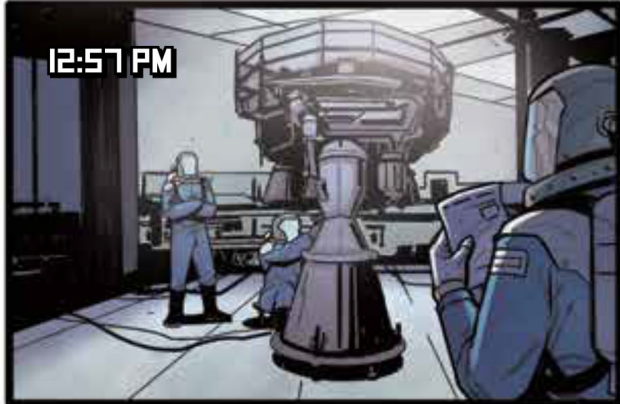
OCCASIONALLY.

SOMETIMES.

FINE, I'M MOSTLY FLYING BY THE SEAT OF MY PANTS, BUT IT FEELS RIGHT AND...*SIGH* OKAY, CONNECT THE CALL.

AND NEIL-- WAKE ME UP WHEN MY DAY'S OVER.

YES, SIR.



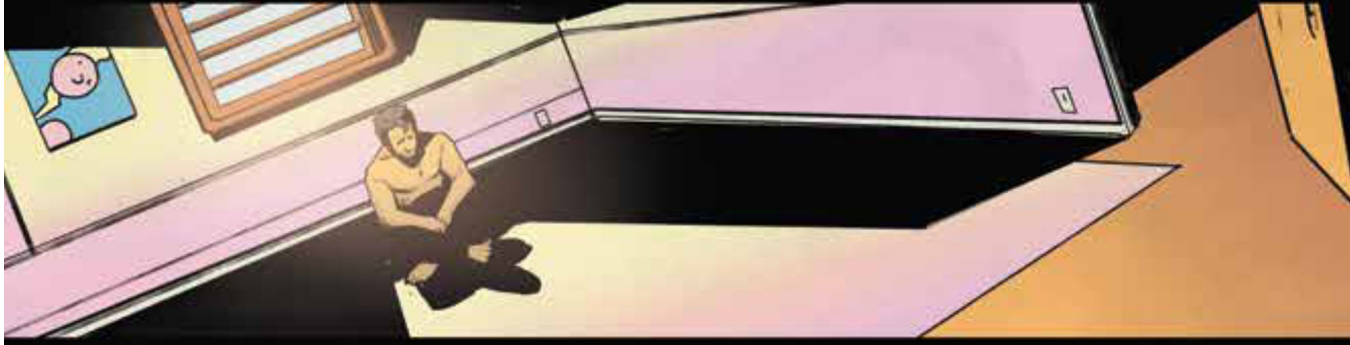




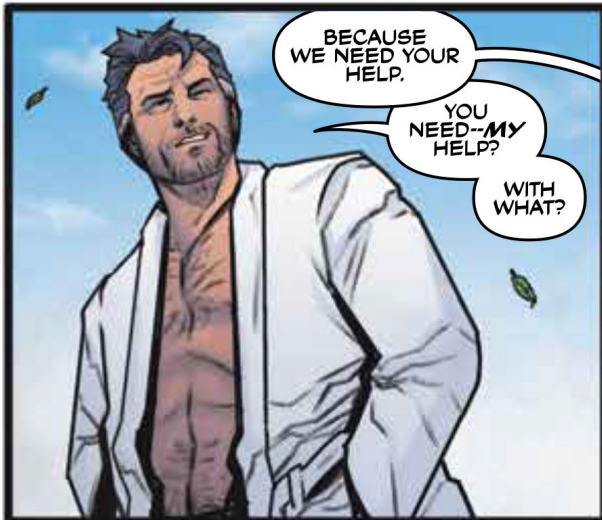
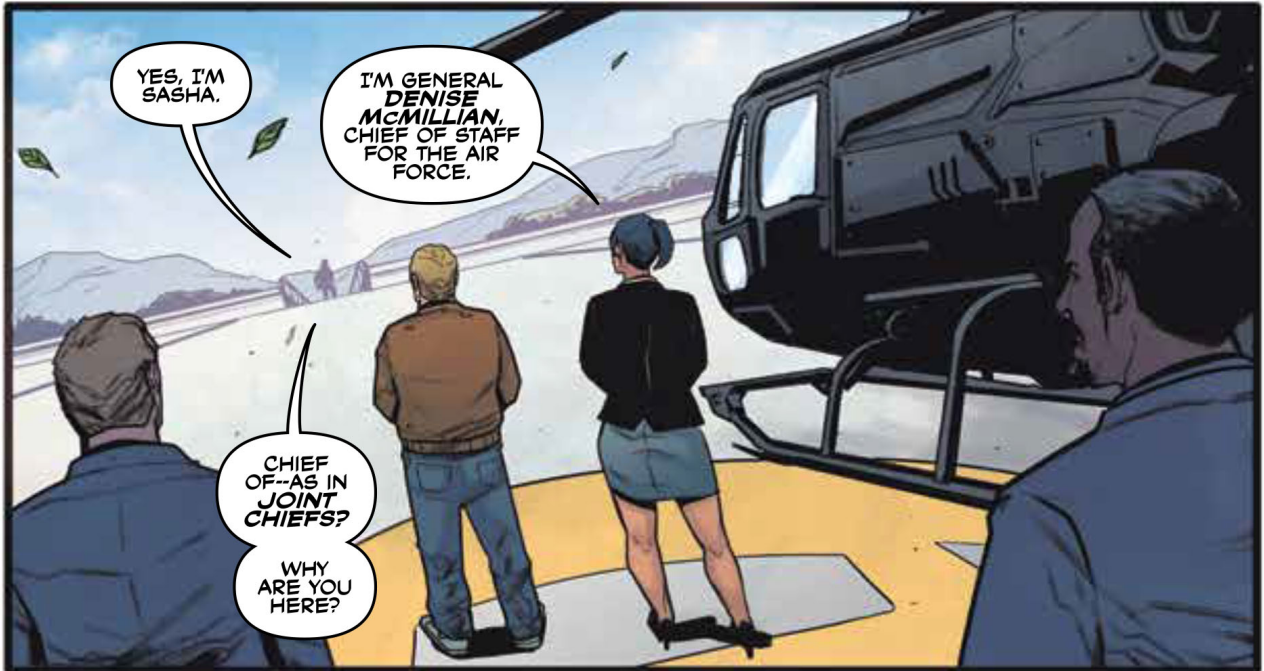
SHUUUHK



**AFTERSHOCK**  
ADVANCES



WHOOOMP WHOOOMP WHOOOMP WHOOOMP





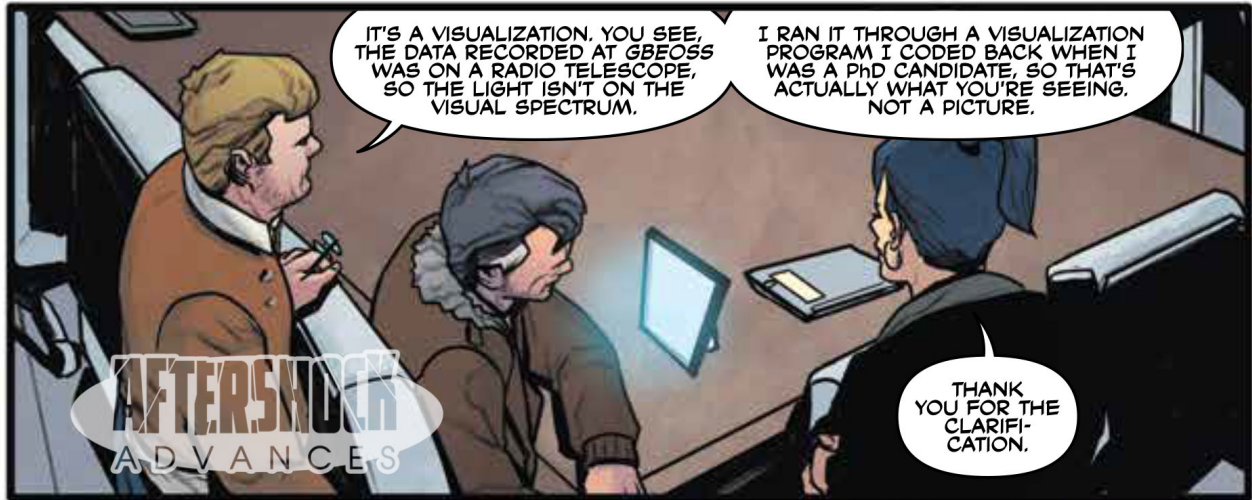


THAT'S A PICTURE OF IT?

THAT'S RIGHT, IT'S A--

WELL, ACTUALLY NO, THAT'S NOT QUITE RIGHT.

19820707-SHAL



IT'S A VISUALIZATION. YOU SEE, THE DATA RECORDED AT GBOSS WAS ON A RADIO TELESCOPE, SO THE LIGHT ISN'T ON THE VISUAL SPECTRUM.

I RAN IT THROUGH A VISUALIZATION PROGRAM I CODED BACK WHEN I WAS A PHD CANDIDATE, SO THAT'S ACTUALLY WHAT YOU'RE SEEING. NOT A PICTURE.

AFTERSHOOT  
ADVANCES

THANK YOU FOR THE CLARIFICATION.



YOU CODED THE PROGRAM?

YEAH, I SAW THAT THE FUTURE OF ASTRONOMY WAS IN PROGRAMMING. I WAS RIGHT, OF COURSE.

YOU KNOW, I HAD THE EXACT SAME THOUGHT ABOUT THE AIRLINE INDUSTRY BEFORE I STARTED PIGEON AND--



GENTLEMEN. WHILE THAT IS ALL FASCINATING, YOU CAN BORE EACH OTHER ANOTHER TIME. WE ARE HERE FOR A REASON. A VERY IMPORTANT ONE.

AND YOU'RE SURE THIS ISN'T JUST AN ASTEROID OR A COMET?

ABSOLUTELY POSITIVE.



THIS IS WHAT A STANDARD COMET OR ASTEROID'S ORBIT LOOKS LIKE.



AND *THIS* IS THE TRAJECTORY OF THE OBJECT WE FOUND, BASED ON OBSERVATIONS OF THE LAST THREE WEEKS.



ALL THAT MEANS IS IT'S NOT FROM OUR SOLAR SYSTEM THOUGH, RIGHT?

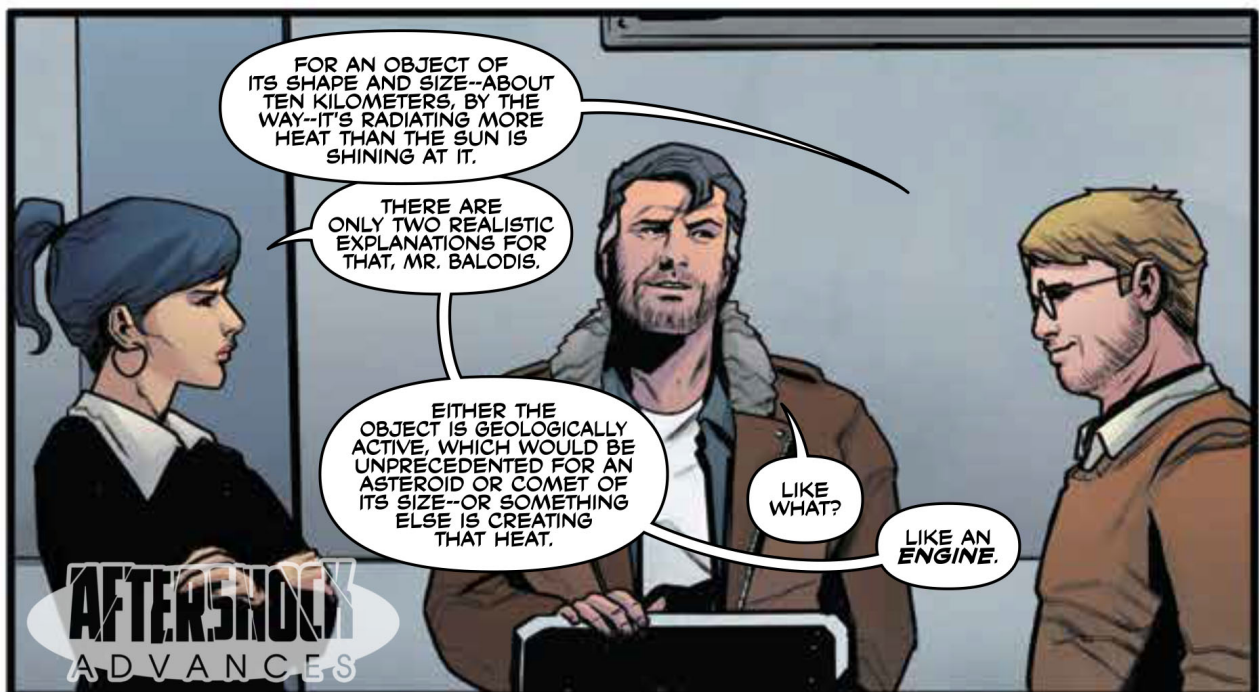
WHICH, DON'T GET ME WRONG, IS STILL EXTREMELY COOL, BUT THAT DOESN'T MAKE IT AN ALIEN SPACE SHIP.

YOU'RE RIGHT. I THOUGHT THE SAME THING--



--UNTIL I SAW THIS. THESE ARE THE INFRARED READINGS OF THE OBJECT.

RIGHT...  
...AND THESE NUMBERS MEAN WHAT, EXACTLY?



FOR AN OBJECT OF ITS SHAPE AND SIZE--ABOUT TEN KILOMETERS, BY THE WAY--IT'S RADIATING MORE HEAT THAN THE SUN IS SHINING AT IT.

THERE ARE ONLY TWO REALISTIC EXPLANATIONS FOR THAT, MR. BALODIS.

EITHER THE OBJECT IS GEOLOGICALLY ACTIVE, WHICH WOULD BE UNPRECEDENTED FOR AN ASTEROID OR COMET OF ITS SIZE--OR SOMETHING ELSE IS CREATING THAT HEAT.

LIKE WHAT?

LIKE AN ENGINE.





SPRIGGEON  
SPACE  
LINES

I WANT  
TO GO.

TO BE CONTINUED...

AFTERSHOX  
ADVANCES

Alex  
Soto